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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6263  
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3725  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0116  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0586  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3859  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 3570  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3980  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1516  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1444  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0288  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0075  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4266  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T BEIRUT 001358

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [UNSC](#) [PBTS](#) [KPAL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: PM HARIRI URGES INCREASED MILITARY AID

REF: A. BEIRUT 1334  
[1](#)B. BEIRUT 1351

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: The U.S. must fully support the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to enable it to implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri told the Ambassador and visiting Special Coordinator for Regional Affairs Frederic Hof on December 18. Lebanon would seek military equipment where available, Hariri underscored, including China or Russia. Hariri expressed his concern that Israel would attack Lebanon to divert pressure on it to return to the negotiation table, but he assessed that Hizballah would not attack Israel unless Iran were confronted militarily. Hariri said that Lebanon wished to move from a cessation of hostilities to a ceasefire with Israel, but an armistice agreement was out of the question without Israel's withdrawal from the Shebaa Farms, he emphasized. End summary.

HARIRI: LAF NEEDS RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT UNSCR 1701  
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[1](#)2. (C) The U.S. must fully support the LAF despite some strategic differences, Hariri insisted. During the period of Syrian hegemony, Lebanon "outsourced" its security to Syria, and the LAF was still being rebuilt, he argued. "How can the LAF implement UNSCR 1701 when it's not mobile?" he queried. The solution, he posited, was a "Marshall Plan" for the LAF. Without that level of commitment from the U.S., he added, "You can't ask why we have not implemented 1701." The U.S. had extended generous support to the LAF, Hariri conceded, but if it really wanted to help Lebanon, it would give more so that the LAF would be a credible force as compared to Hizballah. The Ambassador underscored the U.S. desire to strengthen the LAF so that the LAF could help secure the sovereignty and territory of Lebanon. Hariri said he shared the United States' vision of a lighter, more agile LAF, but emphasized the LAF still needed more equipment. The Ambassador noted the importance of the planned February 2010 Joint Military Commission in developing a long-term LAF strategy.

[1](#)3. (C) Lebanon would seek equipment where available, Hariri continued, enumerating possibilities such as purchasing radar from Russia and upgrading the LAF's tanks via purchases from



China or Russia. Hariri revealed his desire to obtain helicopters from Russia instead of the promised MIG-29s. (Note: We have heard that the Russians refused this request and are focused on the lucrative service package the MIGs will yield after the initial gratis five-year sustainment package expires. End note.) The Ambassador emphasized the value of ensuring inter-operability of LAF systems, particularly given the robust U.S.-sourced LAF inventory.

#### FEARS OF STALLED PEACE TALKS

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¶4. (S) The current lack of progress on regional peace was "giving the extremists more arguments," Hariri complained. He, as well as the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, were confronting allegations that the peace process had accomplished "nothing," he explained, all while Iran was extending its influence in the region. Hariri repeatedly asked why the U.S. opposed Palestinian reconciliation, and Hof explained the administration's deep commitment to achieving a solution while maintaining the Quartet principles. Hariri expressed his concern that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would seek to relieve international pressure on him to return to the negotiating table by attacking Lebanon as a diversionary tactic, and he called for U.S. help "to control Israel." Hof discounted Netanyahu making such a move. Hariri responded that he believed that Hizballah would not risk another war because of pressure from its constituents in south Lebanon. He also claimed that Hizballah had assured him that it would not launch any attacks in the Shebaa Farms region unless Iran were attacked, and he wagered that the militia would not take any action if only sanctions were placed on Iran.

#### NO ARMISTICE WITHOUT SHEBAA FARMS

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¶5. (S) Lebanon would seek a ceasefire with Israel, Hariri stated, and the anticipated return of occupied Ghajar would be a step to regaining the Shebaa Farms. The U.S. "must corner Israel" on the issue of moving from a cessation of hostilities to a ceasefire with Lebanon, he urged. Taking such a step in the context of UNSCR 1701 would "put more pressure on Israeli thoughts of aggression," he assessed. Although an armistice was "a long way off," three years of relative quiet since the 2006 war had opened the way to progress, he explained, adding that Lebanon would not accept an armistice agreement without obtaining Shebaa Farms. When Hof queried Hariri on Syria's attitude toward Lebanon's obtaining Shebaa Farms directly from Israel, Hariri responded that the Syrians had been clear with his Saudi intermediaries: Syria stood ready to demarcate the entire Syrian-Lebanese border with the exception of the Shebaa Farms. Hariri added that he would do the same if he were in Syria's position, and he pointed to negotiations initiated by former Israeli PMs Menachem Begin and Itzhak Shamir as evidence that the U.S. should coerce Israel to return to the negotiating table with the Syrians and Palestinians since "Netanyahu isn't worse than Begin or Shamir." Hof underscored that the U.S. was very active in its attempts to restart negotiations.

¶6. (U) Special Coordinator for Regional Affairs Frederic Hof has cleared this cable.

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